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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

27 March 1973

DATA 73-40/1

MEMORANDUM FOR: Brigadier General Brent Scowcroft, USAF  
Deputy Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Transmittal of "Warning Flag" Note

1. Attached is a memorandum setting down in summary form some of the points raised in several of our recent discussions. This memorandum is not offered as a comprehensive or balanced study. Instead -- as its title indicates -- it is a "warning flag," designed to put its readers on clear notice that a sharp rise in Vietnamese Communist offensive military operations may be imminent.

2. As indicated in the attached note's penultimate paragraph, we have two further studies on this matter under forced draft preparation. They should be finished by Friday, 30 March. One is a "net assessment" comparison of current GVN and Communist military capabilities. The other is a succinct analysis of the issues here involved which addresses obvious, and essential, questions that the attached note does not examine. These include:

a. Whether the current Communist military buildup is motivated primarily by a desire to develop an offensive capability or a desire to develop a defensive capability adequate to handle any military operations the Communists fear the GVN may mount, or think the GVN is planning to mount.

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Date Impossible to Determine	

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*Mac Jones*

b. Whether the buildup reflects a Politburo policy decision already made or a prudential move designed to keep viable a policy course that might become necessary, or a course still being considered and debated.

c. If the Communists do increase their level of military activity, what behavior patterns would be most likely -- e.g., an incremental, gradual augmentation of military pressure or an all-out offensive launched in a manner analogous to Tet 1968 or 30 March 1972.

d. Should the Communists opt for military escalation, within what time frame would they be most likely to move: within the next few weeks (or days), after several more months of "wait and see" (while trying the political competition route), next fall, next spring, some indeterminate future time, etc.

3. As you well know, the above questions (and others related thereto) are complex ones on which the evidence is ambiguous and its interpretation very much subject to honest differences of judgment or opinion. In essence, the problem involves second-guessing the views of a dozen-odd top Vietnamese Communist leaders who almost certainly differ among themselves, may not have made up their own minds, or may change their minds with respect to decisions previously made.

4. The attached "warning flag" note is being sent to you (and Mr. Kennedy) to minimize the risk of the President's being caught off base or by surprise while we are trying to sift the evidence to give him the most comprehensive and balanced analysis possible. The total body of available evidence may be incomplete, somewhat ambiguous and subject to differing interpretations, but there are more than enough warning indicators to warrant an unambiguous alert that major Communist military action could be initiated at any time.

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5. To round out this package, I am also including a summary of the agent reporting alleging that the Communists are planning offensive military operations in the near future.

/s/

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachments

cc: Mr. Kennedy

O/DCI/SAVA:GACarver/mee

Orig - Addressee

1 - Mr. Kennedy

~~1 - VAS/RAG~~

1 - GAC Chrono ✓

1 - WH Special Projects

1 - VAS Chrono

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